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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Fox, et al.
Application No.: 10/695,040
Filing Date: 27 October, 2003
Attorney Docket No. 21220/04146

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DECISION

This is a decision on the petition filed on 15 August, 2005 (but the file was not received into the Office of Petitions until this writing), requesting withdrawal of the holding of abandonment under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

For the reasons set forth below the petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is **DISMISSED**.

NOTES:

- (1) Any petition (and fee) for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within two (2) months from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a)."

(It is noted, however, that Petitioner may be unable to present a satisfactory showing to support a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a), and Petitioner's only alternative will be to file a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b).)

- (2) Thereafter, there will be no further reconsideration of this matter.

- (3) Petitioner may find that the filing of Status Inquiries at three- or four-month intervals following the filing of substantive papers may not only obviate delays in the Office addressing a matter but also provide documentation of diligence required under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to a Restriction requirement mailed by the Examiner on 27 January, 2005, with reply due absent extension of time on or before Monday, 28 February, 2005;
- the application went abandoned after midnight 27 February, 2005;
- Petitioner acknowledges that on or about 27 April, 2005, fully within the statutory reply time, Petitioner learned that the Office action had been mailed on 27 January, 2005;
- the Office mailed the Notice of Abandonment on 1 August, 2005;
- Petitioner indicates he took no action in the three and one-half months between 27 April, 2005, and receipt of the Notice of Abandonment;
- Petitioner filed the instant petition on 15 August, 2005, and, while Petitioner has provided copies of docket sheets, Petitioner has not made the statement of his review of the file jacket, and so has not satisfied the strict construction of the requirements set out at MPEP §711.03(c).

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).¹

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this

¹ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:
35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.
Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

congressional grant of authority. The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.²

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.³ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁴ And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁵ Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.⁶))

Allegations as to the Request to
Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment

The courts have determined the construct for properly supporting a petition seeking withdrawal of a holding of abandonment.⁷

The commentary at MPEP §711.03(c) provides:

***A. Petition To Withdraw Holding of Abandonment Based on
Failure To Receive Office Action***

In *Delgar v. Schulyer*, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971), the court decided that the Office should mail a new Notice of Allowance in view of the evidence presented in support of the contention that the applicant's representative did not receive the original Notice of

² Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

³ See: *Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice*, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁴ See: *In re Application of G*, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁵ See: *Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment*, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office *supra*.

⁶ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

⁷ See: *Delgar v. Schulyer*, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971).

Allowance. Under the reasoning of *Delgar*, an allegation that an Office action was never received may be considered in a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment. If adequately supported, the Office may grant the petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment and remail the Office action. That is, the reasoning of *Delgar* is applicable regardless of whether an application is held abandoned for failure to timely pay the issue fee (35 U.S.C. 151) or for failure to prosecute (35 U.S.C. 133). To minimize costs and burdens to practitioners and the Office, the Office has modified the showing required to establish nonreceipt of an Office action. The showing required to establish nonreceipt of an Office communication must include a statement from the practitioner stating that the Office communication was not received by the practitioner and attesting to the fact that a search of the file jacket and docket records indicates that the Office communication was not received. A copy of the docket record where the nonreceived Office communication would have been entered had it been received and docketed must be attached to and referenced in practitioner's statement. For example, if a three month period for reply was set in the nonreceived Office action, a copy of the docket report showing all replies docketed for a date three months from the mail date of the nonreceived Office action must be submitted as documentary proof of nonreceipt of the Office action. **

The showing outlined above may not be sufficient if there are circumstances that point to a conclusion that the Office action may have been lost after receipt rather than a conclusion that the Office action was lost in the mail (e.g., if the practitioner has a history of not receiving Office actions).

Evidence of nonreceipt of an Office communication or action (e.g., Notice of Abandonment or an advisory action) other than that action to which reply was required to avoid abandonment would not warrant withdrawal of the holding of abandonment. Abandonment takes place by operation of law for failure to reply to an Office action or timely pay the issue fee, not by operation of the mailing of a Notice of Abandonment. See *Lorenz v. Finkl*, 333 F.2d 885, 889-90, 142 USPQ 26, 29-30 (CCPA 1964); *Krahn v. Commissioner*, 15 USPQ2d 1823, 1824 (E.D. Va 1990); *In re Application of Fischer*, 6 USPQ2d 1573, 1574 (Comm'r Pat. 1988). (Emphasis supplied.)

Petitioner has not satisfied the search and statement requirements described (and highlighted) above. Further, Petitioner has yet to explain why it appears that he delayed more than three months after knowing of the Office action before taking any action—including the filing of a Status Inquiry to demonstrate diligence.

CONCLUSION

Because Petitioner has not as yet satisfied the burdens set forth in Delgar v. Schulyer, the petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 hereby is dismissed.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

If Petitioner's only alternative to irretrievable abandonment is a petition alleging unintentional delay under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b),⁸ Petitioner may wish to consider filing a petition to the Commissioner requesting revival of an application abandoned due to unintentional delay.

A petition to revive on the grounds of unintentional delay must be filed promptly and such petition must be accompanied by the reply (the amendment), the petition fee, and a statement that "the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition was unintentional." (The statement is in the form provided and available online.)

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:⁹

By mail: Commissioner for Patents¹⁰
 P.O. Box 1450
 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By FAX: IFW Formal Filings
 (571) 273-8300
 ATTN.: Office of Petitions

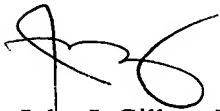
⁸ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.183 sets forth that waiver of the rules is "subject to such other requirements as may be imposed."

⁹ On July 15, 2005, the Central Facsimile (FAX) number changed to (571) 273-8300. The old number no longer is in service and (571) 273-8300 will be the only facsimile number recognized for centralized delivery. (For further information, see: <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/dapp/opla/preognotice/cfax062005.pdf>.)

¹⁰ To determine the appropriate addresses for other subject-specific correspondence, refer to the USPTO Web site at www.uspto.gov.

By hand: Mail Stop: Petition
Customer Service Window
Randolph Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Gillon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John J. Gillon, Jr.
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions